



Florida Fire Chiefs' Association

221 Pinewood Drive • Tallahassee, FL 32303 • 850.900.5180 • www.ffca.org

March 26, 2020

Dr. Scott A Rivkees, M.D., State Surgeon General
4052 Bald Cypress Way
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Re: COVID-19 Testing for First Responders/Source Patients

Dr. Rivkees,

The Florida Fire Chiefs' Association has voiced numerous concerns regarding the testing of source patients, and our first responders, relating to the strains it has placed on service providers due to the excessive amount of time waiting on test results. Are ask of you is, if a hospital receives a patient who was transported by EMS, and who needs to be tested for COVID-19 for either diagnostic purposes or for medical clearance, we respectfully request that testing of the patient and, if need be the EMS provider, be tested by the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Public Health Laboratories. We're not making this request for every transport; we're making this request where on EMS provider is exposed. In other words, they didn't have the full CDC recommended PPE on including gowns, eye protection, N95 mask, and gloves. Our responders are only wearing limited PPE on most calls unless the patient was screened positive as a means of conserving this valuable resource.

First responders, including fire, EMS and law enforcement are suffering potential exposures to persons who are under investigation for COVID-19, and these first responders are being sent home to self-isolate for 14 days while awaiting the test results from the source patient. If the tests are sent to a **private lab**, the results do not come back for **up to 9 days**. If the tests are sent to the **Florida Department of Health (FDOH) labs**, the results come back in **24-48 hours**.

Again, we respectfully request inclusion of a provision in the Surgeon Generals next public health order requiring hospitals to use the FDOH lab for source patient testing following a first responder exposure.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darrel Donatto".

Darrel Donatto, Fire Chief
President
Florida Fire Chiefs' Association
Cc: FFCA Board of Directors